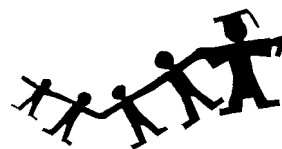


# Linkages to Learning News

## Montgomery County, Maryland



*Linkages to Learning, a Collaborative School-based Partnership among the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public Schools, Public and Private Agencies, Families and Communities*

## Linkages to Learning Website Launched

Linkages to Learning is pleased to announce the launching of its website this January, at the eMontgomery.org portal. The website was developed through a collaboration between eMontgomery and Linkages to Learning.

The website, [www.emontgomery.org/linkages/index.html](http://www.emontgomery.org/linkages/index.html), has a prominent presence under eGov Guide, Linkages to Learning. It is also found under eGov Services and Schools/Education. Project manager Frank McIntosh and Judy Hsu, a University of Maryland intern with the County's Department of Information and Technology, provided creative expertise to the Linkages team.

The website now features the Linkages to Learning video, produced by MCPS, and provides opportunities to connect with local schools and partners to learn about school-based services. Visitors can use the website's interactive functions to volunteer or to support Linkages' families.

Charles Short, director of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, remembers when Linkages struggled to share its needs with community supporters. Short says, "In the early 90s, Linkages to Learning services were offered in only two schools."

"One of the most important lessons learned in those early years was that the few professionals the initiative brought to each school could not possibly meet the broad range of needs that families have by working alone. Linkages provides a model of how limited public resources can be maximized through connections with many businesses, civic and faith groups."

Sharon Friedman, executive director of the Mental Health Association agrees, and shares her hope that the website will serve to "spread the word" to new partners, expanding resources to Linkages diverse population.

"Now that Linkages serves 21 schools in all regions of the County, there is a tremendous opportunity for community partners to connect with the very families that need their help the most. I am optimistic that the website will make it easier and more efficient for others to join the Linkages partnership to help meet the needs of the County's impoverished families."

**See Linkages' website!**

**[www.emontgomery.org/linkages/index.html](http://www.emontgomery.org/linkages/index.html)**

## A Dave & Buster's Thanksgiving

### Inside this Issue:

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Bright and early on Thanksgiving Day, Dave and Buster's of White Flint held their 2nd annual Thanksgiving luncheon and games for Linkages families. Dave and Buster's provided a delicious turkey and ham dinner "with all the trimmings" to 300 children and parents from Linkages to Learning sites.

D&B employees, from busboy to manager, were on-hand to serve dinner, explain the games to parents and assist children. In addition to the festive meal, D&B's offered a great opportunity for parents and children to be together, play games and win prizes.

Linkages staff helped organize the event and plan logistics so families could participate. Thanh Nguyen and Maty Navarro from New Hampshire Estates and Oakview ES and Maricela Gonzalez from Broad Acres helped out at the event, along with Ilene Sparber from the Linkages resource team.

"So, although the Dave and Buster's event offers a traditional Thanksgiving banquet and a respite from their daily labor, it also connects neighbors and families, building a bond with an adopted culture."

"We are very grateful to D&B's for providing a wonderful Thanksgiving experience that will be remembered by Linkages families for many years to come."



*Linkages families at D&B's*

### In the Next Issue

*Features will include:*

*Linkages Volunteers*

*Parent Involvement Activities*

## Vivian Yao Joins Linkages Team

For Linkages, the New Year has rung in some new talent, as Vivian Yao joins the Linkages to Learning family as its private partner representative on the Linkages Resource Team. Following an extensive national search, a team of interviewers with representatives from the private providers, DHHS and MCPS hired Yao, formerly with United Way of Pierce County, Washington.

The group was impressed with Yao's background, which included program development in the non-profit world, teaching high school English and working as an attorney.

It was quickly recognized that her grasp of fund-raising and program evaluation, experience and knowledge of school systems, and legal education would be enormous assets in administering the Linkages partnership.

Working from the Linkages administrative office at 401 Fleet Street, Yao has already begun to meet Linkages staff and partners at schools around Montgomery County.

Yao observes, "As a native of Prince Georges County, my image of Montgomery County as an affluent area has been dramatically altered.

I realize many people, both inside and outside Montgomery County, are not aware of the needs and diversity that exist here."

"As I meet with our staff, I learn about the tremendous strengths and needs of our families and communities. I am so impressed with the Linkages school-based staff and the important work they do."

While employed in Fairfax County, Virginia as a high school English teacher, Yao was exposed to the multitude of issues and problems many children bring with them to school everyday. "Working in the Route 1 corridor, I taught remedial students, many of whom were non-native English speakers or had learning disabilities or other behavioral issues."

"I saw that these problems interfered with the child's ability to learn. As a new teacher, I would have been eager to have had the support that Linkages to Learning provides, and can see that school-based services can complement traditional student support services provided through the guidance office."

Looking ahead, Yao notes that "in the face of Maryland's mental health crisis and the slowing of the region's economy, our providers are seeing increasing numbers of families who are coping with more severe mental health issues and financial burdens."



*Linkages Resource Team Members (L to R)  
Paul Scott, MCPS representative, Irm Pichot, School Health representative, Vivian Yao, private partner representative, and Ilene Sparber, DHHS representative*



## Voices VS. Violence

Voices VS Violence (VTV), a program of the Mental Health Association, is a community-based education and advocacy program that aims to strengthen the families in Montgomery County and enhance youth resiliency.

Voices VS Violence initially approached Linkages when its coalition of concerned community volunteers initiated a coat-drive to help needy children and families. Responding to communities interest in improving neighborhood safety, the Linkages to Learning partnership with VTV was expanded in 1997, with VTV piloting violence prevention workshops to parents and children at two Linkages schools.

As Linkages grew to serve additional school sites, VTV increased its offerings to meet the demand for culturally appropriate and accessible prevention programs. During the last four years, Voices VS Violence and Linkages have jointly surveyed parent interests and held quarterly educational workshops for parents, presented in Spanish and English.

A dinner for families is offered at the school, followed by workshops for parents and activities for children that focus on social skills. Local businesses and volunteer organizations donate raffle items as added incentives.

During this school year, Harmony Hills, Georgian Forest, Viers Mill and Greencastle elementary schools have offered these evening events, with additional sites planning programs for the Spring. Topics include: Coping with Parent Stress, Understanding Early Warning Signs; Parent Participation and Involvement; Youth Violence; Family Communication; Parenting the ADD/ADHD Child; and Keeping Children Safe.

According to Stefanie Zaring, deputy director of MHA, "Familiarizing Linkages parents with the information they need to strengthen their own family is one of our goals. Working with Linkages and local groups, like PTA's, Kiwanis and Lions Clubs and neighborhood associations, our presenters expand families' knowledge of local resources and increase their network of support."

*"When Linkages plans the workshops, parents and kids turn out, because the families know and trust the staff. The outreach efforts of the Linkages school-based teams are essential as we work to reduce the violence that impacts families, schools, workplaces and communities."*

*Mindi Kensinger, VTV director  
Mental Health Association*

## HIGHLIGHTS:

### It just wouldn't have been Fall without...



- Meeting new principals, guidance counselors, nurses, teachers, family service aides, case managers, mental health counselors, site coordinators and interns.
- Providing intensive orientation and training for new Linkages team members.
- Expanding services at new sites, and dealing with lengthening waiting lists for services at many sites
- Sharing information about Linkages services at a number of school and community events, including staff meetings, Back to School Nights and Picnics, Hispanic Information Night, and Open House at the new Judy Center in Silver Spring.
- Training and working with school and community partners to provide services for children and families affected by 9/11 events.
- Planning and conducting workshops and groups for children, adolescents and families, with topics including stress management, anger management for boys, girl's self-esteem group, healthy decisions, teen talk group, money management, acculturation, post-traumatic stress disorder, behavior management; parent involvement; youth violence; family communication; parenting, women's support and empowerment groups, Hispanic educational group, ADD/ADHD child; and keeping children safe.
- Identifying and enrolling students and families to participate in groups and workshops presented in partnership with Project Family Outreach and Voices VS. Violence.
- Recruiting student and adult volunteers to help with tutoring and mentoring programs.
- Participating in staff training opportunities on such issues as: Angry Adolescents, Bioterrorism, Boundaries, Critical Incidents, Community Ministries, Creating Mentally Healthy Communities, Disruptive Behavior, Emergency Housing, How to Help Others, Leadership and Teamwork, Mentoring, Parent to Parent, Prevention Center Resources and, Time Management.
- Streamlining the application process with Working Parents Assistance.
- Creating new outreach efforts with MCPS Department of Family and Community Partnerships and the MCPS ESOL Office.
- Developing Linkages' family involvement plan to empower families and increase self-sufficiency.
- Collaborating with Project Home School Readiness Initiative, an early childhood home-visiting pilot based at Highland in Wheaton, providing intensive intervention and case management services for parents of at-risk preschoolers.
- Offering presentations for groups, including the Maryland 4-H Leaders and the Wheaton Rotary Club.
- Planning multicultural pot-luck breakfasts, luncheons and dinners to celebrate the holiday season.
- Expanding Career Day at Parkland, funded by a 2000 "Close the Gap" grant, arranging for 35 professionals to share insights of their journey from the land of school to the world of work.
- Enrolling hundreds of parents in ESOL classes, and coordinating literacy activities with school and community partners and volunteers, including the Literacy Council and MCPS Adult Education.
- Analyzing data and developing charts to report on Linkages FY01 Outcomes.
- Working with partners to update the Linkages to Learning Six Year Strategic Plan.
- Developing new brochures in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Arranging for the solicitation and delivery of hundreds of Holiday Food Baskets, working with community groups and the Montgomery County Volunteer Center's Holiday Basket Project to coordinate families' needs with local agencies.
- Coordinating the solicitation and distribution of thousands of holiday toys and gifts, working with volunteers to sort, wrap and match donations to the children and families needing support.





## Thanks to our Donors, Volunteers and Partners



- *The Meister family*, for donating baby furniture, baby clothes and toys for a Broad Acres family
- *Mary D'Ovidio*, for donating living and dining room furniture for a Broad Acres family
- *A former Broad Acres teacher* for donating furniture for Broad Acres families
- *Joan Fleming*, for donating 100 children's books to families at Eastern Middle School
- *Montgomery County Volunteer Center's Holiday Basket Project* for providing Thanksgiving and holiday food baskets to families at many of Linkages sites
- *Cecelia Restaurant* of Silver Spring provided spaghetti, salad and bread for Eastern Middle School's holiday party
- *Jodi Mintz*, special education teacher at Eastern Middle School, for donating cookware for a family at Eastern Middle School
- *Fresh Fields* of Silver Spring, for donating \$300 in gift certificates for families from Silver Spring International Middle School
- *Marian Peele and the Capital Area Food Bank*, and to PTSA member *Rueben Gist*, for donating 100 hams and many other non-perishable items to the families of Silver Spring International Middle School
- *Beta Sigma Phi Sorority* for adopting a Summit Hall family throughout the year, providing birthday and holiday gifts, furniture and a VCR
- *Kim Matzen and family*, for adopting a family at Summit Hall ES, providing a holiday dinner and gifts for the entire family of six
- *James Williams*, physical education teacher at Summit Hall, for donating funding to help three Summit Hall families purchase home furnishings and supplies
- *Reverend Joseph Clark and the Episcopal Church of the Ascension* for providing funding to provide two weeks of child care to help a Summit Hall single parent in crisis and for donating holiday toys
- *Ameridream Charity*, for donating 10 food baskets to Summit Hall families
- *Saul Finn*, for donating a computer to a Summit Hall family
- *The City of Gaithersburg*, for working with community agencies and volunteers to provide 49 Summit Hall families with holiday baskets

- *The City of Gaithersburg's Secret Santa program*, for arranging for the donation of holiday gifts for 45 Summit Hall children
- *The City of Gaithersburg*, for working with community agencies and volunteers to provide holiday baskets for families at Gaithersburg MS
- *Konny Brantner and Marvin Memorial Church*, for providing clothing and holiday gifts to a family at Pine Crest ES
- *Nita Armstrong and Children's Basket*, for donating children's coats and gifts for two families at Montgomery Knolls ES
- *Lenora Pong and Church of Christ*, for providing new clothes and gifts to a Montgomery Knolls family
- *National Food Processors Association*, for donating \$500 towards holiday gifts to Pine Crest and Montgomery Knolls families
- *Elizabeth St. John and Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church*, for adopting two Pine Crest and Montgomery Knolls families through its fairy godmother program, providing birthday gifts, cakes and gift certificates for all family members
- *Helping Hands, Progress Place and the Montgomery County Volunteer Center's Holiday Basket Project* for providing Thanksgiving and holiday food baskets to Pine Crest and Montgomery Knolls families
- *Norman Ochs and the Lions Club of Leisure World in Silver Spring*, for donating Thanksgiving baskets to Parkland MS families and for donating \$300 in gift certificates for 12 families
- *St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Rockville*, for donating 15 Thanksgiving baskets and 15 holiday baskets and gifts to Parkland MS families
- *Project Harvest*, for donating 20 Thanksgiving baskets to Parkland MS families
- *Edith Williams and Millian United Methodist Church*, for donating \$150 for baby formula, Thanksgiving baskets and 30 holiday gifts to Parkland MS families
- *Laverne Dixon*, for donating funds for a holiday gift for an adolescent at Parkland MS
- *John Dunn*, for donating funds for holiday gifts for six students at Parkland MS
- *Hope Worldwide*, for donating 70 holiday gifts to Parkland MS families





## Thanks to our Donors, Volunteers and Partners



- *Discovery Communications*, for donating hundreds of children's watches to Linkages families
- *Linda Carlson and Temple Shalom*, for donating hundreds of children's books to Linkages families through its "Mitzvah Day" program
- *Sara Feldman*, for donating 250 books (as a bat-mitzvah project) to Linkages families to support children's literacy
- *Beth DiGiulian and Our Lady of Good Counsel HS*, for donating and cleaning dozens of coats to Linkages families
- *Edward Kubis and Somerford Corporation*, for donating children's books to Linkages families for holiday gifts
- *Eileen Strange and Peapod online grocer*, for donating over \$2,000 of disposable diapers to Linkages families
- *Geneva Day School*, for donating cribs, clothing and gifts to needy Linkages families
- *Temple Beth Ami Nursery School*, for donating clothing, toys, books, cribs, and crib linens to Linkages families
- *K-Mart of Silver Spring*, for donating children and adults' socks and underwear to Linkages families
- *Helping Hands Knitting Group of the Rockville Senior Center*, for donating dozens of hand-crafted children's sweaters, mittens, hats and scarves to Linkages families
- *Starbucks Foundation's All Books for Children and Friends of the Library*, for donating books to Linkages communities
- *Chris Collins and USA Today*, for donating hundreds of new children's books and computer software to Linkages families
- *Ilene Sparber*, for donating funds for holiday gifts for nine children
- *Marcia Kay and Congregation B'nai Israel*, for donating children's holiday gifts to families at Fox Chapel ES and Viers Mill ES through its "Mitzvah Day" program
- *Sharon Strauss*, for donating holiday gifts for two children
- *Frederika Granger*, for donating funds for holiday gifts for 20 children
- *An anonymous donor*, for donating holiday gifts for three children at Greencastle ES and Ban-neker MS
- *Abt Associates, Inc.*, for donating holiday food baskets and holiday gifts for the children of 15 families at Harmony Hills ES
- *The Renew Group at St. Andrew Apostle's Catholic Church*, for donating food baskets for two Harmony Hills families at Thanksgiving and for providing food baskets and gifts for two Harmony Hills families for the December holidays
- *Mr. And Mrs. John Kean*, for a donation to help fund the holiday basket project for Harmony Hills families
- *The Kalai family*, for donating a food basket to a Harmony Hills family at Thanksgiving and for donating a food basket and holiday gifts in December
- *Mr. & Mrs. Castelino*, for donating holiday gifts for 30 children from Harmony Hills ES
- *Harmony Hills ES staff*, for donating food for 20 Harmony Hills families for the December holidays
- *St. Matthews Presbyterian Church*, for providing \$350 in Giant gift cards for 5 families from the Harmony Hills ES community at Thanksgiving, and for donating \$800 in K-Mart gift certificates, serving many families from the Harmony Hills and Viers Mill community
- *American Legion*, for donating Thanksgiving food baskets for 10 Viers Mill families and for donating holiday gifts and food baskets for 10 Viers Mill families in December
- *Viers Mill ES staff*, for meeting the holiday gift needs for several Viers Mill families
- *Patrick Millett and the Eagle Scouts*, for donating holiday gifts for 12 Viers Mill families, including gifts for 44 children
- *Wheaton Kiwanis Club*, for donating Thanksgiving food baskets to 22 families from the Harmony Hills and Viers Mill communities
- *Beverly Plowucha and Jackie Trembath*, for donating a food basket and holiday gifts for a Viers Mill family
- *Joette Murray and Mary Puma*, for donating a food basket and holiday gifts for a Viers Mill family
- *Robin and Tim Brannan*, for donating a food basket and holiday gifts for a Viers Mill family
- *Tim Telling and Mark Strunkard*, for donating a food basket and holiday gifts for a Viers Mill family

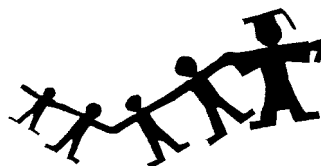


## Thanks to our Donors, Volunteers and Partners



- Julie Hochman, for donating holiday gifts for a Viers Mill child
- Woman's Community Club of Kensington, for donating funds for holiday food baskets and children's winter coats for two Highland ES families
- Mary Margaret Gibson, for donating holiday food baskets for two Highland ES families
- Genevieve O'Connell, for donating holiday food baskets for two families
- Barry Filderman, Mark Lawson and Sheila Robertson of Residential Home Funding Corporation, for donating over 100 children's gifts and for sponsoring Highland's Linkages holiday party, providing food from Chicken Out, carnival games, face painting, a caricaturist and Santa.
- Catholic Family Charities, for donating 19 Thanksgiving food baskets to Highland ES families
- Helping Hand, for donating 32 food baskets for December holidays to Highland ES families
- Connecticut Avenue Estates Civic Association, for donating two holiday food baskets to Highland ES families
- Wheaton Presbyterian Church, for donating 10 Thanksgiving and holiday food baskets, winter coats, and toys to Highland ES families
- Wheaton Presbyterian Cooperative Nursery School, for donating children's holiday toys to Highland ES families
- Eileen Barren and Holton Arms School, for donating two holiday food baskets and gifts to Highland ES families for the Thanksgiving and December holidays
- Alice Tyler and staff from Highland Elementary School, for donating food for Thanksgiving baskets and distributing items to Highland ES families
- Montgomery County Volunteer Center, for arranging for the donation of 12 Thanksgiving food baskets to Highland ES families
- Hope Worldwide, Hearts & Hands/Toys for Tots, for donating 150 toys to Greencastle and Banneker families
- Allen Chapel AME Church, for donating and delivering 11 Thanksgiving baskets to Greencastle and Banneker families
- The Junior Woman's Club of Chevy Chase, for donating snacks and beverages for 75 children and teens at Greencastle ES and Banneker MS
- Liberty Grove United Methodist Church and the Nettie Norris Missionary Society of Allen Chapel, for donating funds for new winter hats, scarves and gloves for Greencastle and Banneker families
- The Tri-City Eagles Midget Gold Hockey Team, for sponsoring a Greencastle family, donating and delivering food baskets and holiday gifts
- Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church, for donating holiday gifts for six Greencastle and Banneker families

***...and to all those community supporters we may have missed, thank you for your generous support!***



*Linkages family at Dave & Busters*

## A Warm Welcome...

### Linkages is pleased to welcome our new site-based staff and interns:

Broad Acres ES:

*Neysa Dawkins*, case manager

*Cynthia Matsakas*, mental health counselor

*Walter Rocha*, family service aide



*Xcoung Nguyen*, family service aide

*Dana Ratsprecher*, graduate student intern, George Washington University

*Christine Lorigo*, graduate student intern, University of Maryland School of Nursing  
*Debbie Compton*, graduate student intern, University of Maryland

Fox Chapel ES:

*Ibrayina Aldana*, case manager

Harmony Hills ES:

*Jayshree Jani*, mental health counselor

New Hampshire Estates ES/Oakview ES:

*Maria Martinez*, family service aide

Pine Crest ES and Montgomery Knolls ES:

*Nancy Jimenez*, site coordinator; case manager at New Hampshire Estates ES and Oakview ES

Rolling Terrace ES:

*Alba Palacios*, family service aide

Sally Ride ES:

*Alcira Colon*, case manager

## ...and a Fond Farewell

We bid a fond "adieu" to Frederika Granger, Linkages to Learning's first private partner representative. Rika was hired following a 1998 "White Paper," which urged the development of a collaborative leadership team to administer the program.

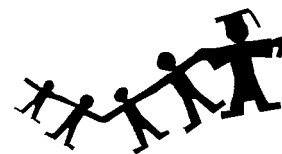
The assessment recommended the formation of a collaborative team, representing the three major partners, to assist the school-based teams and principals on overarching issues for the entire program, including resource development, strategic planning, collaborative decision-making and program outcomes.

Ilene Sparber, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) representative to the Linkages Resource Team, and Paul Scott, Montgomery County Public Schools representative, agree that Rika's leadership and management skills were invaluable during Linkages' greatest growth period.

"Rika helped document the value of school-based services for Montgomery's needy children and families, focusing her energy on developing measurable outcomes that would work across agencies and systems," said Scott, a former principal who joined the resource team in 2000.

Sparber, a DHHS program manager assigned to the Linkages team since 1995, noted, "At the same time, Rika's sense of caring and people skills made a tremendous difference in the way we do business."

Congratulations to Rika and to her husband, Andy Darby, on the birth of their beautiful baby daughter, Holly Granger Darby, born January 14, 2002.



## Multicultural Health Promoters at the School-Based Health Centers

Grant funds awarded by the Maryland School-Based Health Center Initiative are expanding and enhancing Linkages school-based health center services. Linkages' multicultural health promoter program is a grassroots effort to increase access to health care for some of Montgomery's neediest residents.

The multicultural health promoter program has already trained 13 multilingual members from the Broad Acres and Harmony Hills communities to support a number of community outreach efforts.

Joan Glick, pediatric nurse practitioner and nurse manager with the school based health centers, notes, "I don't believe in reinventing the wheel. The success of the training program is largely due to the past experience and cooperation of Mercedes Moore in Health Promotion Services, who developed the County's first programs. Mary Lou Beane and Auxiladora Pacheco, from Community Health Services have also provided support and training to the health promoters. And Brenda Voit, the lead health promoter for the SBHC program, has made great progress in recruiting members."

Glick continues, "We have been fortunate to have the collaboration of many private providers, such as Proyecto Salud and local

physician Dr. Sonia Nieves. Their efforts complement those of public health professionals from the Department of Health and Human Services, like Maria Elena Samayoa from the STD/HIV clinic, Lourdes Sanchez from the Women's Cancer Control Program and Veronica Ramirez from School Health Services."

Other trainers have included Nancy Newton, PTA leader and communications consultant, Beverly Plowucha, Linkages site coordinator from Harmony Hills and Viers Mill, and Ladys Lux, Linkages school community health nurse at Broad Acres.

Linkages multicultural health promoters are assisting residents in completing MCHP applications, helping community members to access health care for their children.

The promoters are sharing prevention information about asthma, diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health, the same issues identified as priorities by County health and advocacy groups.

Working in partnership with public and private health care providers, the new promoters are participating in health fairs and "spreading the word" through outreach in their neighborhoods, schools and churches.





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Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive  
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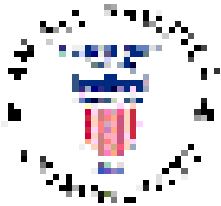
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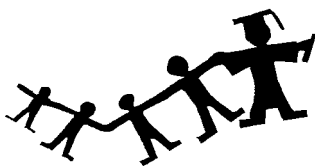
Editor's email: [sharon.strauss@co.mo.md.us](mailto:sharon.strauss@co.mo.md.us)



Winter 2002



(above and right)  
Training of Multicultural Health Promoters  
See story, p.7



(right) The Capital Area Food Bank at  
Silver Spring International Middle School,  
See story, p. 4

